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TAGS: MARR, PREL, US, RP
SUBJECT: SENATOR COHEN'S STATEMENT REGARDING U.S.
- - FACILITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

1. THERE FOLLOWS THE TEXT OF THE OPENING STATEMENT BY
SENATOR WILLIAM S. COHEN (R-MAINE), CHAIRMAN,
SUB-COMMITTEES ON SEA POWER AND FORCE PROJECTION, SENATE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE CONCERNING U.S. FACILITIES AT
SUBIC AND CLARK IN THE PHILIPPINES, APRIL 10, 1986.

2. BEGIN TEXT: THE DECISION TO HOLD THIS HEARING WAS
MADE DURING WHAT WE NOW KNOW WERE THE WANING MONTHS OF
THE MARCOS REGIME IN THE PHILIPPINES. AT THE TIME,
EVENTS IN THAT TROUBLED LAND RAISED SERIOUS QUESTIONS
ABOUT LONG-TERM U.S. INTERESTS IN THE COUNTRY AND THE
REGION.

PRESIDENT MARCOS SEEMED INCREASINGLY UNWILLING OR UNABLE
TO RESPOND TO THE THREAT OF A GROWING COMMUNIST
INSURGENCY OR TO THE NEED FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM. THE
FUTURE COURSE OF THE COUNTRY SEEMED DANGEROUSLY UNSTABLE,
AS DID THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES

AND, IN TURN, U.S. SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE REGION.

AS WE KNOW, MUCH HAS CHANGED IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME.
HAVE RECENT EVENTS, HOWEVER, ALLEVIATED THE CONCERNS OF
SEVERAL MONTHS AGO?

AS WE APPLAUD THE COURAGE OF CORAZON AQUINO AND THE
PHILIPINE PEOPLE, WE MUST STILL GRAPPLE WITH THE QUESTION
OF MAINTAINING SECURITY IN A REGION IN WHICH SOVIET
INFLUENCE IS GROWING AND IN WHICH THE PHILIPPINES AND OUR
OTHER ALLIES CONTINUE TO FIND THEMSELVES FACING HOSTILE
THREATS FROM NEIGHBORS.

SINCE WORLD WAR II, THE MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN THE
PHILIPPINES HAVE SERVED AS IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN
MAINTAINING THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF THE U.S. AND OUR
ALLIES IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGION. A VARIETY OF
DEVELOPMENTS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED
OUR AND OUR ALLIES' INTERESTS IN THE REGION. AS WE
APPROACH THE 1988 REVIEW OF THE BASES AGREEMENT AND THE
1991 EXPIRATION OF THE 25 YEAR FIXED TERM FOR THE

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AGREEMENT, WE MUST EXAMINE THE STRATEGIC, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS BEARING ON THE FUTURE OF THE BASES. THE ATTENTION THAT THIS MATTER HAS GARNERED IN THE U.S. AND THE PHILIPPINES IS EVIDENCE THAT THE DISCUSSION HAS BEGUN.

THIS HAS BEEN UNDERScoreD BY RECENT EVENTS, INCLUDING THE LABOR STRIKE AT U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND SECRETARY WEINBERGER'S VISIT THIS WEEK TO MANILA, WHERE HE APPARENTLY HAD USEFUL DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT AQUINO AND HER SENIOR AIDES. IT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE, WITH SECRETARY OF STATE SHULTSCHEDULED TO VISIT THE PHILIPPINES IN MAY. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS GASTON SIGUR WILL BE TESTIFYING TODAY CONCERNING THESE MATTERS AND HIS RECENT TRIP TO THE PHILIPPINES, WHICH HE CONCLUDED LAST WEEK.

DURING THIS HEARING, WE INTEND TO EXAMINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE U.S. FORWARD DEPLOYMENT POSTURE AND PRESENCE IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC IN DEFENDING THE PHILIPPINES AND HELPING TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND STABILITY IN THOSE REGIONS AND THE MIDDLE EAST.

IN THIS REGARD, WE NEED TO CONSIDER HOW OUR FACILITIES AT CLARK AND SUBIC AND ELSEWHERE IN THE PHILIPPINES HELP TO FULFILL OUR OBJECTIVES, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF ONGOING SOVIET BUILD-UP IN THE REGION, AND WHAT PROSPECTS ARE FOR CONTINUED ACCESS TO THESE FACILITIES. WE SHOULD ALSO

EXAMINE POSSIBLE OPTIONS TO FULFILL THE FUNCTIONS NOW PERFORMED BY THE PHILIPPINE FACILITIES AND THE COST AND RAMIFICATIONS OF SUCH OPTIONS. FINALLY, IN LIGHT OF ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS, PLANNED UPGRADES TO U.S. FACILITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES HAVE COME UNDER DISCUSSION AND SHOULD BE EXAMINED.

WHEN ADDRESSING THESE MATTERS, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO NOTE THAT WHILE OUR NATIONAL INTEREST IN OUR FACILITIES AT CLARK AND SUBIC IS IMPORTANT, IT IS FAR FROM BEING THE ONLY CONSIDERATION IN FORMULATING U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE PHILIPPINES. SUPPORTING THE AQUINO GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO RESTORE THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY AND ESTABLISH HEALTHY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS ARE, OF COURSE, FOREMOST ON THE AGENDA. DEFENDING THE ECONOMIES AND VALUES OF OUR FRIENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND OTHER ALLIED NATIONS IN THE REGION IS, AFTER ALL, A FUNDAMENTAL REASON FOR OUR FORWARD DEPLOYMENTS THERE. MOREOVER, A STRONG FILIPINO ECONOMY AND DEMOCRACY ARE ESSENTIAL TO QUELLING THE INSURGENCY, WHICH, IN TURN, HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE BASES.

I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS STRONG SUPPORT AMONG FILIPINOS FOR CONTINUING THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES. OUR INTEREST IN THE BASES WILL BE BEST SERVED IF THIS INTEREST IS NOT, AND IS PERCEIVED NOT TO BE, THE PRINCIPAL DRIVER OF OUR POLICY TOWARD THE PHILIPPINES.

ONE OF THE MEANS BY WHICH WE CAN AVOID SUCH AN ERRONEOUS AND POSSIBLY DAMAGING PERCEPTION OF U.S. INTERESTS AND INTENTIONS IS TO CAREFULLY EXAMINE OPTIONS FOR CONTINUING OUR VITAL ROLE IN THE REGION THROUGH THE USE OF MILITARY FACILITIES BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE PHILIPPINES. THIS DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT WE ARE PREPARING OR PLANNING TO MOVE OUR FORCES AND FACILITIES FROM CLARK AND SUBIC TO OTHER SITES. IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT WE WOULD CONSIDER REDUCING OUR COMMITMENTS TO OUR FRIENDS IN THE REGION. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS A SIGN OF OUR RESOLVE TO PROTECT OUR AND OUR ALLIES' INTERESTS UNDER VARYING CIRCUMSTANCES.

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AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS IMPORTANT TO DISPEL THE NOTION THAT THE EXERCISING OF ANY OPTION TO REDUCE OUR RELIANCE ON THESE FACILITIES WOULD BE EASY OR WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE. IT WOULD, AMONG OTHER THINGS, COST MANY BILLIONS OF DOLLARS; PROBABLY PRODUCE A NEED TO INCREASE U.S. FORCES; POSSIBLE CREATE DIFFICULT POLITICAL ISSUES WITH SOME NATIONS IN THE REGION; AND, EVEN WITH ALL THESE COSTS, RESULT IN A LIKELY DIMMINUTION IN U.S. MILITARY

CAPABILITES. WHILE THIS PROSPECT IS NOT PLEASANT, IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE AND DANGEROUS TO NOT CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHAT OUR OPTIONS WOULD BE AND TAKE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT WE DO NOT NEEDLESSLY CLOSE OFF OPTIONS.

IN SUM, OUR FRIENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES HAVE ENTERED INTO A CRITICAL PERIOD IN THEIR HISTORY. WE IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE A KEY INTEREST IN SUPPORTING THE COURAGEOUS EFFORTS OF CORAZON AQUINO AND HER ALLIES. AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST CONTINUE TO ASSESS AND DEVELOP OUR CURRENT AND LONG-TERM POLICIES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE SURROUNDING REGIONS. TODAY'S HEARING IS AIMED AT CONTRIBUTING TO THAT EFFORT. END TEXT.

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END OF MESSAGE

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